

## Briefs

## Field Crops

## U.S. Acreage Expands

Planted area for the eight major U.S. field crops (corn, soybeans, wheat, barley, sorghum, oats, cotton, and rice) totals 254.9 million acres in 2000, up more than 3 million acres from last year when prices were lower for most crops at planting time. Increases in corn, soybean, barley, wheat, and cotton area more than offset declines in sorghum, oats, and rice.

Estimates of planted and harvested acreage in USDA's *Acreage* report were based on surveys conducted during the first 2 weeks of June. Compared with USDA's March 31 *Prospective Plantings* report, which indicated farmers' crop intentions for spring plantings in 2000, planted area is 2 percent higher for corn and wheat but 0.5 percent lower for soybeans.

Actual harvested acreage and yield for spring planted crops will be influenced strongly by weather conditions through the growing season. Normal weather would result in large output and stable or declining farm prices for most U.S. field crops in 2000/2001 compared with a year earlier (see *AO* June-July 2000). However, crop potential could be reduced in the Southeast (especially from eastern Louisiana to the Southern Atlantic coast) if additional rainfall does not alleviate dry weather conditions in the region.

Planting and fieldwork were ahead of normal this spring as drier-than-normal weather occurred over large portions of the Southeast, Southwest, Great Plains, and Corn Belt. By mid-May, over 90 percent of U.S. corn acreage had been planted, and as corn planting neared completion, soybean planting accelerated. By the end of May, 85 percent of soybean acreage was planted, and progress was nearly 2 weeks ahead of normal.

U.S. farmers have planted a record 74.5 million acres of *soybeans* in 2000, a 1-percent increase over last year's record. Planted acreage has increased steadily since 1990 when the soybean planted area totaled 57.8 million acres. Farmers are expected to harvest 73.5 million acres, up 1 percent from the 1999 record harvested

acreage. Several factors are behind the rise in soybean plantings, including a soybean loan rate (under the government nonrecourse marketing assistance loan and loan deficiency payment program) that is favorable relative to other crops.

For the third consecutive year, estimated soybean acreage increased in the Great Plains and declined in most of the Midwest, South, Southeast, and mid-Atlantic states. The largest acreage increases were in North Dakota, Nebraska, and Michigan. Farmers in the largest producing states, Iowa and Illinois, decreased soybean area this spring. Other states with large reductions included Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio.

Corn plantings also increased in 2000 to an estimated 79.6 million acres, up 3 percent from last year due to stronger futures prices at planting and favorable spring weather. Corn acreage to be harvested for grain is estimated to increase to 73.1 million acres, also up 3 percent. Total corn acreage for Corn Belt states, at 48.5 million acres, increased 2 percent from last year, due in part to reduced soybean plantings (*AO* May 2000). Illinois, Iowa, and Ohio increased planted acreage from last year. Outside the Corn Belt, in South Dakota, Missouri, North Dakota, and Kansas, corn acreage increased sharply from last year's high levels. USDA report-

ed that 75 percent of the crop was in good or excellent condition as of July 16.

*Sorghum* plantings dropped again in 2000 to an estimated 8.8 million acres, down 5 percent from 1999, as acreage declined in most of the major producing states due to weak feedgrain prices. This is the lowest planted acreage on record. Texas, with 2.94 million acres, reports the largest reduction, a decrease of 8 percent from 1999. Kansas, the largest sorghum producing state, decreased plantings 6 percent to 3.4 million acres. Acreage expected for grain harvest in 2000, at 8.1 million acres, is down 5 percent from the 1999 grain acreage and is the lowest level since 1953.

*Barley* plantings increased in 2000 to an estimated 5.7 million acres, up 9 percent from last year's record low. The largest increases were in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota. Favorable weather this spring and higher premiums for malting barley encouraged farmers to increase plantings. Most of the 1999 barley crop was planted by late May.

Total *wheat* planted acreage for harvest in 2000 is estimated at 62.9 million acres, fractionally higher than last year. Compared with intentions in the March *Prospective Plantings* report, plantings are up 2 percent for total wheat, up 12 percent for durum wheat, and up 5 percent for other spring wheat. Producers plan to harvest about 54.4 million acres, up 0.5 million from last year. (See upcoming September *AO* for outlook for U.S. durum market.)

## Acreage Up for Corn, Soybeans, Wheat, and Barley

	1999 acreage			2000 acreage		
	Prospective	Planted	Harvested	Prospective	Planted	Harvested <sup>1</sup>
	<i>Million acres</i>					
Corn	78.2	77.4	71.0	77.9	79.6	73.1
Soybeans	73.1	73.8	72.5	74.9	74.5	73.5
Wheat	63.0	62.8	53.9	61.7	62.9	54.4
Sorghum	9.3	9.3	8.5	9	8.8	8.1
Barley	5.3	5.2	4.8	5.7	5.7	5.2
Oats	4.7	4.7	2.5	4.4	4.5	2.5
Rice	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.2
Cotton	13.9	14.9	13.4	15.6	15.6	14.6 <sup>2</sup>
Total	251.1	251.7	230.2	252.6	254.9	234.6

1. Forecast. 2. Harvested cotton area is based on 1990-99 average acreage abandonment by state, as reported in the July 12, 2000 *World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates*. Harvested area for other crops is estimated in the June 30, 2000 *Acreage* report.

## Biotech Plantings Update

Biotech soybeans and cotton remain popular with U.S. farmers in major producing states, accounting for more than one-half of acreage for both crops. The shares of U.S. planted acreage devoted to crops developed through biotechnology reached 54 percent for U.S. soybeans and 61 percent for U.S. upland cotton this year—up 2 percentage points for soybeans and 5 percentage points for cotton compared with the March *Prospective Plantings* report. U.S. farmers cut back the share of acreage planted to biotech corn—from about one-third in major producing states last year to 25 percent in 2000—the same as indicated for 2000 in the *Prospective Plantings* report (AO May 2000). These estimates are derived from a survey of randomly selected farmers.

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## Biotech Varieties Account for More Than Half of U.S. Soybean and Cotton Acreage in 2000

	Total planted acreage	Biotech share
	1,000 acres	Percent
<b>Soybeans</b>	<b>74,501</b>	<b>54</b>
Iowa	10,600	59
Illinois	10,300	44
Minnesota	7,200	46
Indiana	5,700	63
<b>Upland cotton</b>	<b>15,350</b>	<b>61</b>
Texas	6,300	46
Georgia	1,450	82
Mississippi	1,360	78
North Carolina	940	76
<b>Corn</b>	<b>79,579</b>	<b>25</b>
Iowa	12,300	30
Illinois	11,200	17
Nebraska	8,400	34
Minnesota	7,100	37

U.S. total and top four states.

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA

Economic Research Service, USDA

Cotton plantings for 2000 are estimated at 15.6 million acres, 5 percent above 1999 and unchanged from the March *Prospective Plantings* report. All major producing states except Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina increased area. Although planting-time prices were about the same as a year earlier, expected returns were higher for cotton than for competing crops like corn and soybeans.

Texas, the largest cotton producing state, completed most plantings by late June, although some replanting was necessary in the Texas High Plains on fields damaged by rain, wind, and hail. In mid-July, 54 percent of the Texas crop was rated in good or excellent condition, and 29 per-

cent was rated in fair condition. In California, ideal weather in early April allowed plantings to proceed ahead of normal. The hot weather California has been experiencing has been beneficial for cotton development, with the crop maturing at a very good rate. In early July, 60 percent of the California crop was noted in good or excellent condition. Prospects for a large U.S. crop led to a fall in cotton prices from May to June, but recent hot and dry weather has added uncertainty to the market

Rice plantings for 2000 are estimated at almost 3.3 million acres, down nearly 9 percent from 1999, with long grain acreage down 12 percent. Weaker prices

for long grain rice and some weather problems, primarily in Louisiana, are responsible for much of the contraction in rice acreage. In contrast, combined short and medium grain plantings are up more than 2 percent—with California accounting for the bulk of the increase—due to tight stocks and relatively robust prices in 1999. **AO**

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## Upcoming Reports—USDA's Economic Research Service

The following reports are issued electronically at 3 p.m. (ET) unless otherwise indicated.

### August

- 11 *World Agricultural Supply & Demand (8:30 am)*
- 14 *Cotton & Wool Outlook (4 pm)\*\**  
*Oil Crops Outlook (4 pm)\*\**  
*Rice Outlook (4 pm)\*\**
- 15 *Feed Outlook (9 am)\*\**  
*Wheat Outlook (9 am)\*\**
- 21 *Agricultural Outlook\**
- 23 *U.S. Agricultural Trade Update (3 pm)*
- 29 *Livestock, Dairy & Poultry (4 pm)\*\**
- 30 *Outlook for U.S. Agricultural Trade\**

\*Release of summary, 3 p.m.

\*\*Available electronically only